



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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*The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.*

*Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.*

## MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2016-2018

Steve Vagnozzi	Chair
Tom Purmort	Vice-Chair
Steve Vagnozzi	Treasurer
Open	Secretary
John Langdon	Gov'l/Public Affairs Coordinator
Robert Tischbein	Membership Coordinator
Kay Chase	Communications Coordinator
Adam Tauno Williams	Meetings Coordinator
Robert Patterson	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
Mark Miller	Northern Region Chair
Charles Shong	West Region Chair
Joshua Hamilton	East/Central Region Chair

*The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak  
ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase*

## 2018 MEETINGS

**27 January** – Member Meeting  
Okemos Public Library

**20 February** – Executive Committee

**20 March** – Executive Committee

**21 April** – Member Meeting  
MSU Detroit Center

**29 May** – Executive Committee

**June** – Meeting Cancelled

**14 July** – Executive Committee  
Durand Union Station

**7-9 August** – Michigan Rail Conference  
Saginaw State University

**28 September** – Special Event  
during Grand Rapids Art Prize

**27 October** – Meeting Cancelled

**10 November** – Annual Meeting  
Dearborn

**December** – Executive Committee

Visit [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)  
Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

## Some Clarity on PTC But Questions Remain on Commitment to the National Network

In testimony before a House subcommittee on September 13, Amtrak stated *"It is our goal to continue to operate all of our services over all of our current routes come January 1, 2019."* It had been reported earlier that Amtrak intended to require Positive Train Control on all segments of all its routes. This raised concerns about six of Amtrak's routes that operate over lines, segments of which are exempted from PTC-compliance by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). These include portions of the routes of the Cardinal, California Zephyr, Texas Eagle, Downeaster, Vermonter, Ethan Allen and City of New Orleans.

Comforting as Mr. Naparstek's assurances may be regarding PTC, the future of the *Southwest Chief* remains uncertain among persistent doubts about Amtrak's commitment to the National Network. For these reasons, we, as supporters of passenger trains, are urged to contact our elected officials in Washington DC to remind them that we need more trains, not fewer. With Congress poised to finalize the FY2019 budget, there could not be a better time to make our voices heard.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association has set up a [quick and easy way](#) to ask Congress to send a clear message to Amtrak. Ask them to:

1. Support the Moran/Udall Amendment, which requires Amtrak to operate the Southwest Chief in FY2019;
2. Support the improved levels of funding for passenger rail and transit passed in both the House and the Senate (HB 6147); and
3. Require Amtrak to honor all FRA Positive Train Control exemptions. Without these exemptions, Amtrak could not operate six of its routes.

## CLICK HERE TO SEND YOUR MESSAGE NOW!

For insight into the complexity of PTC implementation, [see this statement](#) submitted by Scot Naparstek, Amtrak's Executive Vice President and COO, to the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials. Also testifying at the same 13 September hearing, FRA Administrator Ronald Batory submitted [this written statement](#), which offers a useful tutorial on the requirements of the PTC mandate.

## MARP Special Event in Grand Rapids

MARP is venturing into new territory as sponsor of a fundraiser and networking event in Grand Rapids on Friday, September 28, during ArtPrize 10. Plan to bring the family and spend a day or two enjoying ArtPrize, the biennial event that brings hundreds of thousands of people to West Michigan to view and experience art projects from around the world. Questions? Send email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com). See the article on next page for details.

## Special Event During ArtPrize 10 in Grand Rapids

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, the only inter-city transportation advocacy group in the state of Michigan, is pleased to present Elaine S. Wilson, the creator of *"Charting the Wolverine"* as a guest speaker in a unique fund raiser and networking event.



**ART +  
TRANSPORTATION**

**Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers  
presents Elaine Wilson,  
creator of "Charting the Wolverine"**

One Bourbon Lounge  
608 Bridge St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
Friday, September 28 at 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM EDT  
[CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR TICKET](#)

This unique event brings together art and the critical issues of our state's infrastructure. Enjoy the presentation, the lovely *One Bourbon Lounge* and some of the best cocktails in the city (cash bar) while meeting fellow art enthusiasts, transit wonks, rail fans, and history buffs.

There is no charge for a ticket, but a ticket is required. Please consider a donation of at least \$15 with your ticket. [CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR TICKET.](#)

The MARP event is scheduled during **ArtPrize 10**, taking place in Grand Rapids September 19 – October 7. This international art competition last year drew 500,000 visitors and artists from around the world. A unique feature is that the public votes to decide the winner of one of the two top prizes of \$200,000.

ArtPrize is free and open to the public and takes place in venues—indoors and out-of-doors—all around downtown Grand Rapids. Visit [www.ArtPrize.org](http://www.ArtPrize.org) for complete information on planning your visit.

Elaine Wilson's ongoing project *"Charting the Wolverine"* documents, with maps and paintings, the communities she glimpses along the route of Michigan's *Wolverine* train. Speaking of her work, she says, *"My paintings are about revealing the specific nature of a place through repeated encounters versus capturing a particular moment. Over several visits, I find out more about a setting to see if I can unearth a rhythm of mark and color that elevates what I notice into something that others will find compelling. Every place has stories. As I work I discover what they are."* You may preview Ms. Wilson's work at [elainewilson.com/charting-the-wolverine](http://elainewilson.com/charting-the-wolverine). You will also enjoy this [short video](#) by MARP member Joshua Hamilton.

### Election of Officers Set for Annual Meeting

Would you like to have a more active role in the work of your organization? Or do you know someone you think is a good candidate for a leadership role? If you answer "yes" to either of those questions, please let a member of the nominating committee know by sending an email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

As prescribed by the [MARP Bylaws](#), election of officers and eight executive committee members occurs in even-numbered years during the Annual Meeting, this year scheduled for 10 November in Dearborn. In addition to Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary, the executive committee includes four At-Large Executives and four Regional Chapter Chairs. Treasurer is an appointed position.

The Executive Committee is responsible for setting policy for the organization and determining the annual budget. As set forth in the Bylaws:

- the Chair is the chief officer and spokesperson for MARP and presides at all meetings;
- the Vice-Chair presides in the absence of the Chair and

also oversees the work of the At-Large Members and Regional Chapter Chairs;

- the Secretary keeps minutes of executive committee and general membership meetings and handles correspondence;
- At-Large Executives, in current practice, each serve as coordinator of one of the four elected committees that have responsibility for:
  1. arrangements for meetings,
  2. membership recruitment, orientation and activation,
  3. liaison with public officials and allied advocacy groups,
  4. communications via website, print and online publications and coordination of outside presentations;
- Regional Chapter Chairs are responsible for advancing MARP's purposes and encouraging active member participation within their regions.

*Current officers are: Steve Vagnozzi (Chair and Treasurer), Tom Purmort (Vice-Chair); Kay Chase, John Langdon, Robert Tischbein, and Adam Tauno Williams (At-Large); Joshua Hamilton, Mark Miller, Robert Patterson and Charles Shong (Regional Chairs). The Secretary position is open.*



## SAVE THE DATE!

**MARP 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
**Saturday, November 10, 2018**

O'Kelly Banquet Hall  
23663 Park St, Dearborn MI 48124

The featured speaker will be Mr. Paul Larouche, recently retired from Bombardier where he was Product Manager for High Speed and Commuter Rail passenger vehicles.

*Details in the October Issue*

**Midwest High Speed Rail Association**  
**Business Luncheon 2018**  
**October 11, 2018, 11:00 am**  
**Roanoke Restaurant**  
**135 W. Madison St., Chicago, IL**



Chad Edison, Deputy Secretary for Transportation, will speak about the innovative new **California State Rail Plan**. MHSPRA executive director Rick Harnish characterizes the plan as "perhaps the only American plan in recent memory that is big and bold enough to get passenger rail right."

For more information [click here](#).



**RUN Annual Meeting & Public Forum**  
**Pioneer Valley Planning Commission**  
**60 Congress Street, Springfield MA**  
**Saturday, October 13, 2018, Noon-5 pm**

This Rail Users' Network meeting will highlight efforts that have resulted in the expansion of passenger rail service between New Haven and Springfield, Massachusetts as well as the proposed pilot program to offer additional service, starting in 2019, along the northern end of the "Knowledge Corridor" in Massachusetts. There is no cost to attend, but registration is necessary. For complete information [click here](#).

**Rail Passengers Association**  
**RailNation Miami 2018 Advocacy**  
**Summit & Meeting**  
**October 19 - October 21**

[More Information](#)



## East Lansing Ticket Agent Next To Go

Although official confirmation has not been given, it has been reported that the East Lansing Amtrak station is next in line to lose its ticket agent. As with other recent closings in Niles, Jackson and Flint, caretakers will be hired to open and close the waiting rooms and provide limited assistance to passengers. In response to the elimination of station agents across the country, the **Rail Passengers Association** is about to launch a Station Volunteer Program, initially

*(continues in next column)*

## Ride the Rails to Michigan Trails

On July 25, 2018, bikes were welcomed aboard Michigan's **Wolverine** trains for the first time. Bicyclists may now bring their bikes along on all three Michigan routes—indeed on all state-supported routes throughout the Midwest.

To spread the word, MARP is collaborating with **Amtrak Midwest<sup>SM</sup>**, MDOT, the **League of Michigan Bicyclists** and the **Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance** to produce and distribute posters and information to bike shops, train stations, visitor's centers, chambers of commerce, community bulletin boards, colleges, universities and other public places throughout the state.

Among the trails easily accessible from the **Wolverine** are the **Rouge Gateway Trail** in Dearborn, bicycle friendly streets in Ann Arbor and Royal Oak, the **Falling Waters Trail** in Jackson, the **Battle Creek Linear Pathway** in Battle Creek, and the **Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway** in Kalamazoo. Transfer at the Detroit Amtrak station to the bicycle-friendly **QLINE** streetcar and ride it along Woodward Avenue to the heart of the city where **The River Front**, the **Dequindre Cut**, and Michigan's **Iron Belle Trail** all beckon. The best part? You don't even need a bike to enjoy the ride!

**MDOT Road and Trail Biking Maps** or **Michigan Trails Magazine** have excellent maps and information on trails throughout the state.

If you would like posters to distribute in your community or via social media, please contact:

**John-Langdon@sbcglobal.net**  
or phone him at 616.218.9009



*(continued from previous column)*

Involving five states: Michigan, Alabama, Florida, Illinois and Texas. The program will operate on the idea that a knowledgeable and informed volunteer can answer travelers' questions about trains and services, promote rail advocacy, highlight local attractions, foster a spirit of hospitality and promote an inviting atmosphere at the station.

If you would like to be trained and serve as a station volunteer, please send an email with your interest to [volunteer@narprail.org](mailto:volunteer@narprail.org).

A recent analysis commissioned by the American Public Transportation Association found that commuter- or intercity-rail travel is 18 times safer for passengers than auto travel.



## View from elsewhere . . .

*“While this risk analysis process and mitigation plan development is still underway, let me be clear that Amtrak’s goal is to continue to operate all of our services over all of our current routes come January 1, 2019. Exactly how we accomplish this will vary across our network, based on the specifics of each route, but I want to assure the Committee that, at this time, we believe we will have strategies in place that will permit us to continue operations until operational PTC or PTC-equivalency is achieved for all of our network.”*

--Scot Naparstek, Amtrak Executive VP and COO, in [written testimony](#) submitted to Congress 13 September 2018

*“While railroads are making progress, FRA expects that most railroads will need to request an alternative schedule to complete testing, obtain PTC System Certification, meet the statutory interoperability requirements, and fully implement PTC systems on all main lines required to be governed by PTC systems. FRA continues to take a proactive approach to help railroads acquire, install, test, and fully implement certified PTC systems as soon as possible.”*

--Ronald Batory, FRA Administrator, in [written testimony](#) submitted to Congress 13 September 2018.



## Looks are Deceiving

This pastoral scene is actually one of the busiest rail junctions in the country. Eight separate rail lines intersect at this point, known as the Forest Hills Jct. Long freight trains waiting for traffic to clear create backups in all directions, a major cause of delays for Amtrak trains traveling to and from Michigan, New York and Washington, DC. With the recently announced award of \$132 million in federal funding, the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project soon will be underway, part of the years long [CREATE Program](#) to untangle rail traffic in the Chicago area. Watch this [fascinating animation](#) to see how this chokepoint will be relieved.

*Photo by Jeff Stagl*



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## Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard  
202-224-3121

**Sen. Debbie Stabenow**

**Sen. Gary Peters**

**Find Your Congressperson**

**Find Your State Senator**

**Find Your State Representative**